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DEPARTMENT FOR D, AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG,
AF/EX, OBO FOR RSHINNICK, NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/26/2018
TAGS: [SU](#) [ASEC](#) [ABLD](#) [AMGT](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: SUDAN AGREES TO RELEASE NEC CONTAINERS, PROMISES
FURTHER STEPS

REF: A. STATE 41931

[1B.](#) KHARTOUM 582
[1C.](#) KHARTOUM 574
[1D.](#) KHARTOUM 560

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11.](#) (C) Summary: Sudan agreed to release long-delayed NEC containers beginning the morning of April 29 with all in country released by the end of the week. The Sudanese are also clearing up any remaining UNAMID shipment backlog in anticipation of a continuing dialogue with the US, the MFA's Under-Secretary explained. The Sudanese are pleased with the tenor and scope of the initial round of talks with the Americans but less pleased about congressional attacks on Sudan at a recent hearing. U/S Siddiq showed newfound willingness to allow the arming of local Embassy guards and in granting visas to Americans. End summary.

NEC CONTAINERS RELEASED ON APRIL 29

[12.](#) (C) In the absence of FM Alor, CDA Fernandez met with MFA Under-Secretary Mutriff Siddiq on April 27 to discuss a range of bilateral issues including the Rome talks, NEC containers, visas and embassy security. CDA presented contents of reftel A to Siddiq and read to him the section on US reciprocal steps in return for releasing NEC containers (OFAC license for mortgage for new Sudanese property in Washington and OFM permission to renovate existing property). Siddiq said that this was not what was agreed to in Rome and "you can check with those on the U.S. side who were there." Sudan's main problem in Washington was not the properties but banking issues. CDA referred Siddiq to reftel's points on banking and forcefully suggested that this is the best Sudan could hope for and stated that he needed an affirmative answer from the Sudanese before OOB Washington time on April 28.

[13.](#) (C) Later in the day, Siddiq called back after checking with Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie who agreed that the order will be given as of the morning of April 29 to release containers held in Khartoum with the rest from Port Sudan to follow later in the week (April 27-28 are holidays in Sudan). Nafie said that Sudan was taking this step "in hopes of seeing reciprocal action by the Americans," and in order "to facilitate the job of SE Williamson in convincing others in the US that Sudan is serious about improving relations."

[14.](#) (C) Siddiq said that, as a participant, he thought the talks had gone extremely well and that the American side had been pleasantly surprised about how ready and flexible the Sudanese side was to solve problems. Let's be frank, he added, "the required steps towards improving relations and

getting what you want, will be harder for you to do than for us." He added that the Sudanese had noted with interest the violent and aggressive nature of the questioning of Special Envoy Williamson by the US Senate this week, especially by the Democrats. "We didn't like everything he said either, but we realize that he was backed into a corner."

HOW FAR ARE AMERICANS WILLING TO GO?

15. (C) Siddiq said that Williamson's seriousness had elicited reciprocal seriousness by the Sudanese. "Someone must have explained to him our psychology," he laughed pointing to the Charge, because "he approached us in Rome in just the right way." He said that in advance of an agreement, the Sudanese were moving ahead on some related business of interest to the Americans. They had attempted to clear up delayed UNAMID shipments at Port Sudan and discovered from UNAMID Administrative Chief Muhammad Yunus that there are no back-logged UNAMID shipments, except for one shipment for the Rwandans which arrived with absolutely no documentation. Yunus reportedly admitted that this was the UN's fault and is preparing the appropriate paperwork.

16. (C) The Under-Secretary said that "even though some of us wonder how far or how quickly you Americans are willing to go," the Sudanese were ready to keep talking and trying to solve issues of concern of the American side. He said Sudan would have a detailed list of their own specific "asks" for the USG for the next meeting related to specific sanctions cases and other matters.

17. (C) CDA handed Siddiq a list of 32 remaining visa requests from the USG (mostly State Department TDYers plus five remaining UNAMID MILOBs). He said that approval of visas for

UNAMID personnel is strictly contingent on UNAMID formally asking for them. He added that "we don't delay visas for Americans for political reasons" but that the overlapping responsibility for visas by the MFA Protocol, Americas, Peace (for Darfur), and Consular Departments does create confusion. Muttriff added that no embassy in Sudan asks for, and gets, as many visas and as much attention and cooperation as the Americans.

A CHANGE ON ARMING LOCAL GUARDS?

18. (C) CDA asked again about obtaining MFA permission to arm a select number of stationary local guards in front of embassy facilities such as the Chancery and the USAID compound. Siddiq had previously downplayed the possibility of granting such a request, which the Embassy has been pressing for since October 2007 (reftels) in the aftermath of evidence from an August 2007 terrorist plot. He said that he had reconsidered this in the light of the Embassy's security concerns and as a favor because of the CDA's keenness to improve relations with Sudan. Siddiq would meet with NISS and MOD officials "but I think this is something we can do." He promised a response within a week to our request.

19. (C) Comment: All indications from multiple official sources are that the NEC containers are being released although we will confirm this as it happens. If indeed the MFA (consulting closely with MOD and NISS) agrees this week to allow the arming of some Embassy guards - a repeated request made both orally and in writing by the Mission going back six months - this could significantly improve embassy security at some fixed sites. These steps are being taken by the Sudanese as confidence building measures in anticipation of greater American willingness to address Sudanese concerns. The Sudanese avidly read the US Senate testimony by SE Williamson and were very irritated by what they saw as ill-informed and outdated attacks by some senators pandering to a partisan domestic audience. If the Sudanese regime feels that the USG is once again taking punitive actions against

their country, they will be perfectly willing to increase pressure on the US Mission in Sudan, including, but not limited to, blocking NEC construction as they have repeatedly done since 2006. End comment.

FERNANDEZ